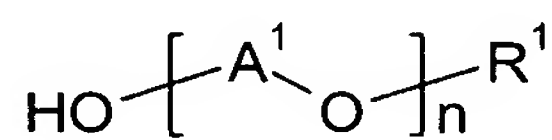


## IN THE CLAIMS

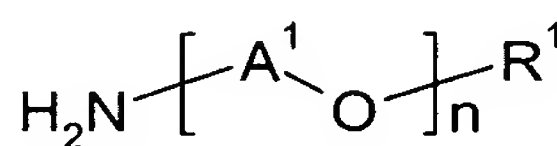
Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A process for the production of semifinished products or leather, wherein pelts, pickled pelts or semifinished products are treated with

- a) at least one sheet silicate and
- b) at least one copolymer which is ~~obtainable~~ obtained by copolymerization of at least one ethylenically unsaturated dicarboxylic anhydride (A), derived from at least one dicarboxylic acid of 4 to 8 carbon atoms,  
at least one vinylaromatic compound (B1) or  
at least one oligomer (B2) of branched or straight-chain C<sub>2</sub>-C<sub>10</sub>-alkene, at least one oligomer having an average molecular weight M<sub>n</sub> of from 300 to 5 000 g/mol or being obtainable by oligomerization of at least 3 equivalents of C<sub>2</sub>-C<sub>10</sub>-alkene,  
and  
optionally at least one ethylenically unsaturated monomer (C) differing from (A) and having at least one hetero atom,  
and reaction with  
at least one compound (D) of the formula I a or I b



I a



I b

and optionally hydrolysis with water or aqueous alkaline solution,

where, in formula I a and I b,

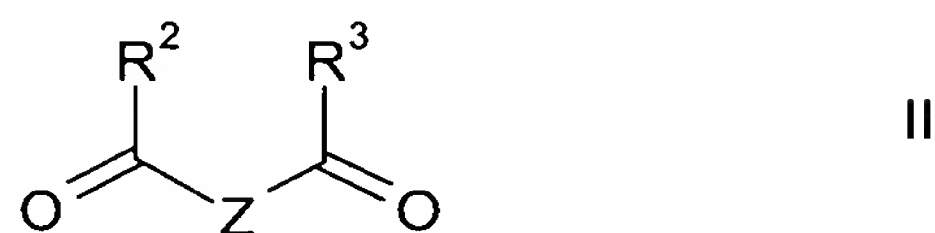
A<sup>1</sup> are identical or different and are C<sub>2</sub>-C<sub>6</sub>-alkylene

R<sup>1</sup> is linear or branched C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>20</sub>-alkyl and

n is an integer from 1 to 200.

Claim 2 (Original): The process according to claim 1, wherein pelts, pickled pelts or semifinished products are additionally treated with

- c) at least one substance which is selected from dicarbonyl compounds of the formula II



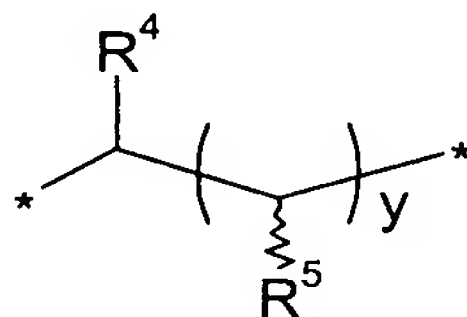
and substances which liberate a dicarbonyl compound of the formula II in the presence of water, where, in formula II,

$\text{R}^2$  and  $\text{R}^3$  are identical or different and are selected from hydrogen,  $\text{C}_1$ - $\text{C}_{12}$ -alkyl,  $\text{C}_3$ - $\text{C}_{12}$ -cycloalkyl, substituted or unsubstituted,  $\text{C}_7$ - $\text{C}_{13}$ -aralkyl,  $\text{C}_6$ - $\text{C}_{14}$ -aryl, substituted or unsubstituted, it being possible in each case for two neighboring substituents to be linked to one another with the formation of a ring;

or  $\text{R}^2$  and  $\text{R}^3$  are linked to one another with formation of a ring,

Z is selected from a single bond and bivalent organic groups, which in turn are selected from substituted or unsubstituted  $\text{C}_1$ - $\text{C}_{12}$ -alkylene units, unsubstituted or substituted  $\text{C}_5$ - $\text{C}_{12}$ -cycloalkylene and unsubstituted or substituted  $\text{C}_6$ - $\text{C}_{14}$ -arylene.

Claim 3 (Original): The process according to claim 2, wherein Z is



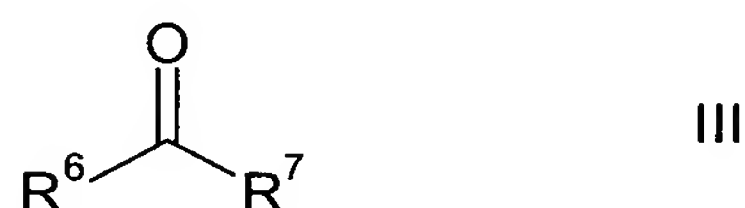
where

$\text{R}^4$  is selected from hydrogen,  $\text{C}_1$ - $\text{C}_{12}$ -alkyl,  $\text{C}_3$ - $\text{C}_{12}$ -cycloalkyl, substituted or unsubstituted,  $\text{C}_7$ - $\text{C}_{13}$ -aralkyl,  $\text{C}_6$ - $\text{C}_{14}$ -aryl, substituted or unsubstituted,

y is an integer from 1 to 4, and

R<sup>5</sup> are identical or different and are selected from hydrogen, C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>12</sub>-alkyl, C<sub>3</sub>-C<sub>12</sub>-cycloalkyl, substituted or unsubstituted, C<sub>7</sub>-C<sub>13</sub>-aralkyl, C<sub>6</sub>-C<sub>14</sub>-aryl, substituted or unsubstituted, it being possible for R<sup>4</sup> with neighboring R<sup>5</sup> or in each case two neighboring radicals R<sup>5</sup> to be linked to one another with the formation of a ring.

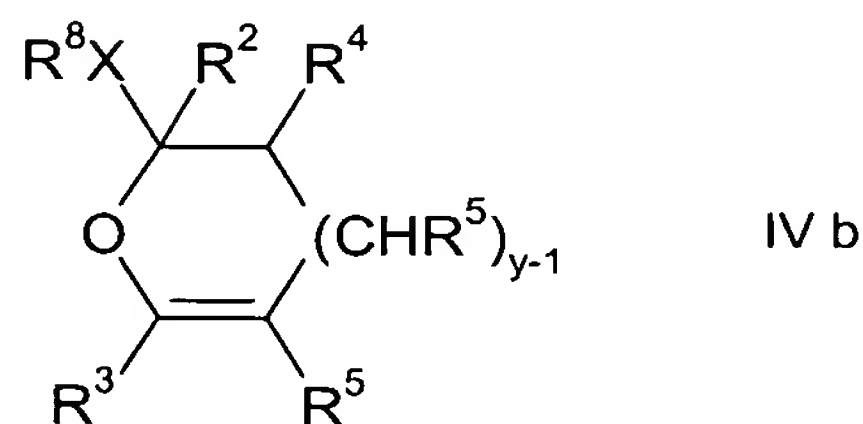
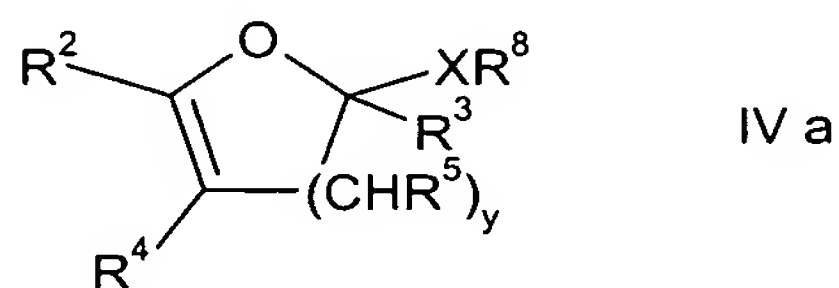
Claim 4 (Currently Amended): The process according to ~~either of claims 2 and 3~~ claim 2, wherein at least one substance which liberates a dicarbonyl compound of the formula II in the presence of water is obtainable by reacting at least one carbonyl compound of the formula III



where

R<sup>6</sup> and R<sup>7</sup> are identical or different and are selected from hydrogen, C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>12</sub>-alkyl, C<sub>3</sub>-C<sub>12</sub>-cycloalkyl, substituted or unsubstituted, C<sub>7</sub>-C<sub>13</sub>-aralkyl, C<sub>6</sub>-C<sub>14</sub>-aryl, substituted or unsubstituted, it being possible for R<sup>6</sup> and R<sup>7</sup> to be linked to one another with formation of a ring,

with at least one dicarbonyl compound of the formula II and with at least one cyclic compound of the formula IV a or IV b



where

X is selected from oxygen, sulfur and N-R<sup>8</sup>, and

$R^8$  are identical or different and are selected from hydrogen,  $C_1$ - $C_{12}$ -alkyl,  $C_3$ - $C_{12}$ -cycloalkyl, substituted or unsubstituted,  $C_7$ - $C_{13}$ -aralkyl,  $C_6$ - $C_{14}$ -aryl, substituted or unsubstituted, formyl,  $CO$ - $C_1$ - $C_{12}$ -alkyl,  $CO$ - $C_3$ - $C_{12}$ -cycloalkyl, substituted or unsubstituted,  $CO$ - $C_7$ - $C_{13}$ -aralkyl,  $CO$ - $C_6$ - $C_{14}$ -aryl, it being possible for  $R^2$  and  $R^8$  or  $R^5$  and  $R^8$  to be linked to one another with formation of a ring and, where  $X$  is  $N$ - $R^8$ , it being possible for two radicals  $R^8$  to be linked to one another with formation of a ring.

Claim 5 (Currently Amended): The process according to ~~any of claims 2 to 4~~ claim 2, wherein  $X$  is oxygen.

Claim 6 (Currently Amended): The process according to ~~any of claims 2 to 5~~ claim 2, wherein, in formula IV a,  $R^2$  to  $R^5$  are each hydrogen and  $R^8$  is methyl.

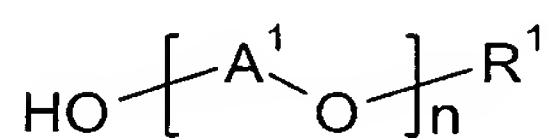
Claim 7 (Currently Amended): The process according to ~~any of claims 1 to 6~~ claim 1, wherein styrene is selected as a vinylaromatic compound (B1) in at least one copolymer (b).

Claim 8 (Currently Amended): The process according to ~~any of claims 1 to 7~~ claim 1, wherein a sheet silicate having a number average particle diameter of up to 2  $\mu m$  is used as the sheet silicate (a).

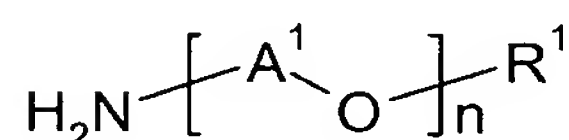
Claim 9 (Currently Amended): The process according to ~~any of claims 1 to 8~~ claim 1, wherein drying to a residual water content of 45% by weight or less is effected after the treatment with (a), (b) and, if appropriate, (c).

Claim 10 (Currently Amended): A formulation comprising

- a) at least one sheet silicate and
- b) at least one copolymer which is ~~obtainable~~ obtained by copolymerization of at least one ethylenically unsaturated dicarboxylic anhydride (A), derived from at least one dicarboxylic acid of 4 to 8 carbon atoms,  
at least one vinylaromatic compound (B1) or  
at least one oligomer (B2) of branched or straight-chain C<sub>2</sub>-C<sub>10</sub>-alkene, at least one oligomer having an average molecular weight M<sub>n</sub> of from 300 to 5 000 g/mol or being obtainable by oligomerization of at least 3 equivalents of C<sub>2</sub>-C<sub>10</sub>-alkene,  
and  
optionally at least one ethylenically unsaturated monomer (C) differing from (A) and having at least one hetero atom,  
and reaction with  
at least one compound (D) of the formula I a or I b



I a



I b

and optionally hydrolysis with water or an aqueous alkaline solution,

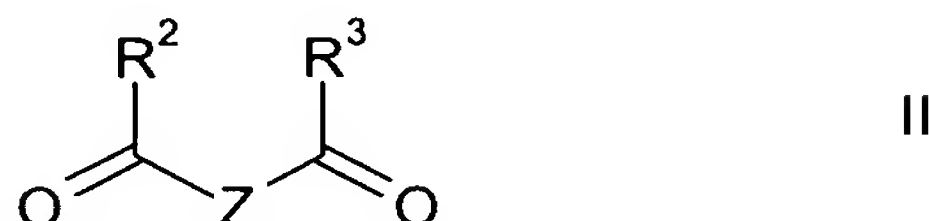
where, in formulae I a and I b,

A<sup>1</sup> are identical or different and are C<sub>2</sub>-C<sub>6</sub>-alkylene,

R<sup>1</sup> is linear or branched C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>20</sub>-alkyl, and

n is an integer from 1 to 200.

Claim 11 (Original): The formulation according to claim 10, additionally comprising at least one substance which is selected from dicarbonyl compounds of the formula II



and substances which liberate a dicarbonyl compound of the formula II in the presence of water, where, in the formula II,

$\text{R}^2$  and  $\text{R}^3$  are identical or different and are selected from hydrogen,  $\text{C}_1$ - $\text{C}_{12}$ -alkyl,  $\text{C}_3$ - $\text{C}_{12}$ -cycloalkyl, substituted or unsubstituted,  $\text{C}_7$ - $\text{C}_{13}$ -aralkyl,  $\text{C}_6$ - $\text{C}_{14}$ -aryl, substituted or unsubstituted, it being possible in each case for two neighboring radicals to be linked to one another by formation of a ring,

Z is selected from a single bond and a bivalent organic group which in turn are selected from substituted or unsubstituted  $\text{C}_1$ - $\text{C}_{12}$ -alkylene units, unsubstituted or substituted  $\text{C}_5$ - $\text{C}_{12}$ -cycloalkylene, unsubstituted or substituted  $\text{C}_6$ - $\text{C}_{14}$ -arylene.

Claim 12 (Currently Amended): The formulation according to claim 10 [[or 11]], which is an aqueous formulation.

Claim 13 (Currently Amended): The formulation according to claim 10 [[or 11]], which is a pulverulent formulation.

Claim 14 (Currently Amended): [[The]] A process for the preparation of [[a]] the formulation according to ~~any of claims 10 to 12~~ claim 10, wherein

- a) at least one sheet silicate and
- b) at least one copolymer and, ~~if appropriate~~ optionally

- c) at least one dicarbonyl compound of the formula II or  
at least one substance which liberates a dicarbonyl compound of the formula II  
in the presence of water are mixed with one another.

Claim 15 (Currently Amended): A process for the preparation of [[a]] the pulverulent formulation according to claim 13, wherein said formulation is obtained by spray-drying.

Claim 16 (Currently Amended): A semifinished product or leather produced by a process according to ~~any of claims 1 to 9~~ claim 1.

Claim 17 (Currently Amended): ~~The use of a semifinished product or leather, produced by a process according to any of claims 1 to 9,~~ A method for the production of articles of clothing, pieces of furniture and automobiles and automotive parts comprising utilizing the semifinished product or leather produced by the process according to claim 1 to produce clothing, furniture, an automobile and an automobile part.